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While many of the stories shared on the Wall of Fame are about walking and fitness, my story is about another mode of transportation and another form of wellness: **DRIVING & SAFETY!**

We are fortunate at the Nebraska Department of Labor to include the Office of Safety as part of our agency, and its Director, Bill Hetzler. Bill is a great guy and will, from time-to-time, share special safety messages or short videos with DOL staff. On Thursday, January 12, 2012, Bill shared a "Life Saving Story!" ~ a first-hand account from a City of Omaha employee who had recently had a car accident. Bill's e-mail caught my attention immediately: "Sometimes crashes happen when you least expect it. You're minding your own business, driving carefully, and you're suddenly upside down hanging from your safety belt." Yikes! I drive carefully. I drive defensively. But others don't always and that visual image stuck in my mind as I read the article about the accident. And for some reason, it stuck with me all day.

Admittedly, I had become somewhat lax lately about wearing my seatbelt. Medical issues and chronic pain perhaps caused me to think I was tempting fate. I know better, but still, that visual image of hanging upside down from a seatbelt just gnawed at me. Click it – *got it!*

Two days later I had a rare weekend off from my second job and headed out from home to meet my retired boss and his wife for our annual (but belated) holiday lunch together. It was January but one of those incredibly sunny and warm days. As soon as I got in the car, the story Bill shared and "Click it!" message stuck in my head and I put on my seatbelt before I even started the car. Yay for me, I thought. What a beautiful, wonderful day, I thought.

On my way to the restaurant, on a through and major street, I was looking forward to a great lunch and visit in just a few minutes. Green lights all the way. Then, suddenly, I see a white pickup truck traveling toward me in the opposite direction merge into his turn lane, then he just *turned!* Left turn, right in front of me, and I knew immediately there was absolutely no way I could avoid hitting him. Hard. I hit my brakes for all I was worth, and thought, "Oh, NO. He did NOT just turn right in from of me! We're going to crash. I hope I live." Impact. Black out.

Many minutes later I came to, choking on small debris and smoke in the car. My air bag had deployed. I reached over to open the power window to get fresh air and my left hand hurt terribly. Someone came to help me out of the car and I was stunned to see the pickup truck on its side. I had been forced to T-bone him and my small car must have scooped under the truck and turned it over. The driver was helped out of the top passenger door by some helpful men, but his wife was *hanging by her seat belt*. Rescue personnel went to work. I was in shock, literally.

Long story short, both vehicles were totaled immediately and while we were all injured, we were all wearing our seatbelts and survived without critical injuries. The driver was ticketed for Negligent Driving, and I felt terrible to learn he was 83 and his wife 81. He said he just didn't see me. Sad. My pre-impact thought, "I hope I live" has given me a new outlook and I have never, ever neglected to "Click it" in my new vehicle. And, once again, my retired boss and I will have to reschedule our 2011 holiday lunch. But for now, it's time for me to pay it forward.

